SYLLABUS

COMM 556 Digital Outreach and Engagement
MASTER OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY (MACT)

Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta
Sept. - Oct. 2017 (6 weeks)
Online, with synchronous and asynchronous components

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For course related queries, please contact the instructor by sending a private message through the eClass site. The instructor will respond to most queries within one business day.

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ABOUT THE COURSE

A hands-on experience in participatory action research in collaboration with the MARS Lab and one or more community organizations to design, implement, and evaluate a communications project using digital technologies.

Since 2012, the MARS Lab in the MACT Program has undertaken research collaborations with community organizations to explore and experiment with techniques and strategies for enhancing community outreach and engagement with digital technologies.

A core focus of recent work has been to develop techniques and emerging best practices for using Short Message Service (SMS) over mobile phones to support real-time communications between outreach organizations and their constituencies. This focus is part of a broader objective of the MARS Lab to find ways to develop capacity within community organizations to adopt and use a range of affordable digital technologies in innovative and effective ways.

A central objective or goal for this course is to provide students with hands-on experience in participatory action research by working with the MARS Lab and a community organization to design, implement, and evaluate a communications project using affordable digital technologies. The course includes a scholarly component involving readings in theory and method, which will culminate in a final research paper or report. Theory and method is intended to inform an applied component that typically involves students training on and working with digital technology and software. The applied component also involves designing and implementing a communication project or a small-scale action research study, and carrying out an evaluation in close collaboration with a community organization.

Course Description

An elective course on selected topics in communication and technology. This course includes a community service learning component.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- draw on course readings and other sources to present and explain the social history of a selected communication technology as part of the planning process for the hands-on project;
- draw on course readings and other sources to present and explain key technical concepts in the design of a selected communication application as part of the planning process for the hands-on project;
- collaborate with the community organization to plan, implement, and evaluate a small scale applied communication project using a selected communication technology under the guidance of the course instructor;
- draw on course readings and other sources to explain and discuss the social context and issues that are of central concern to the participating community organization in a written report;
- draw on course readings and and other sources to clearly explain and interpret the mandate of the community organization, its role, activities, and challenges in a written report;
- collaborate with the community organization using participatory action research methodology to plan, implement, and evaluate a small scale research project under the guidance of the course instructor;
- in consultation with the course instructor and following instructions set out in the course curriculum, prepare written reports that summarize and critically reflect on activities undertaken as part of the course;